

9.

*The Lawfulness and Use of
Publick Feasting.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached in

The Church of St. Peter in Cornhil,
December 4. 1705.

Being the

Anniversary Meeting

OF THE

N A T I V E S

of the COUNTY of

S O U T H A M P T O N.

By JOHN HARRIS, M. A. & F. R. S.

Chaplain to the Right Honourable the L^d Keeper.

L O N D O N : Printed for R. Wilkin, at the King's-Head,
in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1706.

to All who desire to be
Baptized

СЕРМОН

The Church of St. Paul in Germany

October 12, 1828.

Preached by

Universitatis Medicorum

of the

СВИТАЙ

of the Good Word

СОТМАНТИОЗ

by John H. M. F. Esq.

Chaplain to the Royal Engineers

and Author of "A New Method of

"Theology," "A New Method of

TO

Mr. Richard Walter, Tr.
Francis Douse,
Henry North,
John Burrett



Mr. Charles Lee,
Peter Ridge,
Henry Noss,
Robert West.

S T E W A R D S
O F T H E
*Anniversary Feast, Held by the
Natives of the County of*
SOUTHAMPTON,
T H I S
S E R M O N,
Which was Preach'd by their Appointment
and Publish'd at their Request,
Is D E D I C A T E D,

B Y

Their Humble Servant,

J. HARRIS.

TO

S T E M A R D S
of the
Masties of the County of
SOUTHAMPTON
THIS
S E R Y M O N
P R E D I C A T E D
B Y
T H O M A S H A R R I S
W h i c h w a s P r e s e n t e d b y t h e i r A b b o u n d a n c e
s u c h P u b l i c k g o d t h e i r R e d e e f f

Eccl. ix. 7.

Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart ; for God now accepteth thy Works.

THE great Design of this Excellent Book, is to demonstrate what is Man's Chief Good ; and what ought to be the great End and Aim of all our Actions. As to the former of these, wherein the Chief Good or Happiness of Man consists ; Solomon shews in the beginning of Ch. 1. (in General) that it cannot consist in any thing in this World, because all here is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.

And then in Particular, he refutes the several mistaken Opinions that Men had about it ; which he seems to reduce to four Heads :

I. He shews the Vanity of Wisdom, as he and the Antients usually called it : That is, of such Knowledge as is usually attainable here by the Study of Nature, or of the Politicks and Transactions of the World : for he found this Study vain, because it is endless and tedious ; and vastly too great, both for the Compass of our Lives, and for the Extent of our Capacities : and be-

sides this, instead of giving us any true Satisfaction, it too often fills our Minds with Doubts and Difficulties, and exposes us also to the Envy and Malice of Ignorant Persons; who will be sure to treat any one ill that pretends to know more than they.

After this, in the three first Verses of the 2d Chapter, and in part of the third, he shews the Vanity of placing Happiness in sensual Pleasures; first, because of their short Duration, continual Interruptions, and repeated Satieties: and also because they are inadequate to the Desires of a Rational Soul, which still seeks something beyond them and above them.

And then because some Persons have propos'd to find Happiness by the mixture of these two together; that is, by uniting sensual Pleasures and the Study of Human and Philosophical Learning both together; he also shews the Vanity of this, and tho' indeed he mightily prefers the *Latter* to the *Former*; yet he shews that they, either singly, or united, are vain and unsatisfactory in comparison of what ought to be the *Summum Bonum*, or the proper Object of the Soul's Happiness.

After this, in the third Chapter, at v. 16. and so on to v. 9. of Chapter 5. He refutes a *Third Opinion* about Happiness, yiz. That it

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consists in Power, Command, and Empire; in Honour, Authority, and Glory: as afterwards in part of the 5th and 6th Chapters, he doth also the Notion of those who will needs have *Riches and Wealth* to be the greatest of all Blessings.

All which having done, he proceeds farther to shew, that true Happiness is only to be had in a religious and serious Fear of God, and in keeping of his Commandments.

Because in *this*, there is no mixture of *Vanity*, nor *Vexation of Spirit*, as there is in all other Pursuits; no Uncertainty, no Satiety, but is durable and lasting, and brings with it full and adequate Satisfaction and Tranquillity of Mind here, and a comfortable Assurance of an Eternal Life hereafter, where all our Joys and Happiness shall be fully compleated.

This, I say, is, in general, the excellent Design of this useful and instructive Book; throughout which *Solomon* intersperses, by the by, many admirable Observations and practical Rules, in order to our obtaining as much Happiness in this World, as is consistent with the Defects and Imperfections of Earthly Enjoyments.

And 'tis one of those Observations that thus introduces the Words of my Text.

At the 16th Verse of the preceeding Chapter, he begins to speak of the Unsearchableness of God's

God's Providence, with Regard to the Events and Issues of Things in this World: Shewing, That tho', no doubt, they are all distributed by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness; yet there is very little that we can discover of the Secrets of God's Counsels, and as to the Reasons of particular Events:

But that apparently all things here come alike to all, and that there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, as he expresses it at Ver. 2. Now the Use that he would have made of this Observation, is not to conclude, as some foolish and wicked Persons did, that therefore there is no Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice. On which account their Heart, he observes, is so filled with Madness and Folly, that they will indulge themselves in all Sensuality and Wickedness, tho' it shorten their Days, and cut them off hastily from the Enjoyment of those Things, in which they yet place their only Happiness: and then when they are Dead, saith he, they shall lie undistinguish'd in the Grave, and all Memory of them shall be forgotten.

And this I take to be the Sense of the 3d and following Verses, to the 7th. But the true Use that we should make of the Consideration of these Things, is this: That since the Mazes of Providence are so intricate, and the Reasons of

God's

God's Proceedings (in particular cases) so inscrutable, we should therefore never be anxiously concerned about them ; but we should let the absolute Uncertainty that there is in the Enjoyment and Continuance of all Earthly things, and the undoubted Certainty of our own dying in a little while, and leaving all such Trifles behind us, we should let these excite us to a free and cheerful Enjoyment of the good things of this World, while they are before us ; and we ought always to believe, that if we approve our selves to God, by doing our Duty to him in other Respects, this Method of proceeding is pleasing and acceptable to God ; and that 'tis his Will we should gratefully rejoice in the Enjoyment of such Blessings as he hath graciously provided for our Use. Or, in the Words of the Text, *That we should go our way, eat our Bread with Joy, and drink our Wine with a merry Heart, for God now accepteth our Works.*

This I take to be the Connexion of these Words ; with what precedes them ; and which I thought proper to clear up to you, because at first sight, it is not very obvious and apparent.

In discoursing on which words, I shall endeavour;

I. To shew you what eating our Bread with Joy and drinking our Wine with a merry Heart implies,

and that 'tis allowable and lawful to make a cheerful Use of such good Things as God hath provided for us, for our Food and Refreshment. And

II. That there may very good Use be made, and great Advantages be drawn, from sometimes doing this Publickly, in solemnly appointed Feasts and Entertainments.

First, As to the Expression here, *go thy way, and eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart*; (as I have before hinted in general, from the Occasion of the Words) it certainly implies, that 'tis the Duty of every Man to go on in his *way*, that is, in the *way* of his Calling and Profession, in his Business and Employment, with Diligence and Chearfulness: And instead of amusing and perplexing himself with over-nice Enquiries into the Secrets and Meanders of God's Providence, as to the disposal of particular Events: Instead of being over-solicitous and anxious about Furturities, and distrusting God's Providence over us; instead of repining and being dissatisfied with that State of Life that God has allotted us; instead of this, I say, we should, with Minds filled with due Returns of Praise and Thanksgiving to God for the present good Things which we enjoy; with Countenances,

tenances not solemnly and affectedly fullen and soure, as if we grudg'd to be beholden to God Almighty for his Gifts, or envied and condemned every one that looks pleas'd ; but with Faces so chearful and joyous, as may shew that we are contented with our present Portion, and that we don't distrust God's Care over us, and Provision for us, for the future ; and also with Hearts truly filled with Joy and Gladness, from a Reflection that we are in God's Favour ; who we know *now accepteth our Works*, because they are agreeable to his Nature and Will , and conformable to his Laws.

With these Qualifications, I say, we may and should use and enjoy chearfully and plentifully, those Good Creatures that God hath so kindly provided for us.

Tis true, this must still be done with a due regard to the Rules of Virtue, Temperance and Prudence ; and without any Excels, Extravagance or Vice. We may eat our Bread with Joy, but not with Gluttony and Surfeiting ; nor out of a Design to administer Fuel to exorbitant Desires, and vicious and lascivious Inclinations ; norwith such extravagant Expence and Profusenes, as exceeds our Station, Fortune and Circumstances in the World.

So also we may drink our Wine with a *merry Heart*, but it must not be with a *mad one*: we must not loose by it the Exercise of our Reason, the guard of our Virtue and Prudence; nor should we drown there all Sense of Religion and Conscience.

By running into such *foolish*, as well as wicked Excesses: Men deprive themselves entirely of the Benefit of mutual Conversation: which is, or ought to be the improving one another in Virtue, in Learning, in good Sense, and in a useful knowledge of the World; and also by innocent Mirth and Diversion, to qualify us the better, to go on with the Busines of our Callings or Professions: But by Drunkenness, Debauchery and Excess, Men impair their Health, Strength and Vigour, shorten their Days, mispend their *present Time*, and unfit themselves for usefully employing the *future*, and in one word, instead of that Joy and Delight which a sober, moderate and temperate use of the Creature would bring to them, are under continual disorder of Body, and dissatisfaction of Mind.

But however, we may and ought to understand, That when, being govern'd by the Rules of Religion, Prudence, and moral Virtue, Men avoid running into all Excesses and Extreams of these, or such like kinds of Evil; they may always

ways chearfully and sometimes plentifully enjoy the Good things of this World: because God hath graciously given them to support us in Being, to supply the Defects, and to repair the Decays, of Nature.

Of this there can be no doubt, if we consult either Scripture or Reason. In the Scripture we find not only a mention made of Feasting as long ago as *Lot's* and *Abraham's* Time, and this without any Condemnation of it, as being an unlawful Practice; but also that God himself did enjoin many Solemn Feasts to be held annually and periodically in that Form of Worship, which he appointed to the Hebrew Nation.

And so far was the Holy Jesus, the Blessed Author of our most excellent way of Salvation, from disallowing Feasting and Innocent Entertainments, That he honour'd a Marriage Feast (at *Cana* in *Gallilee*) with his own useful and Instructive Presence: and where also he wrought the first Miracle that we read of, by turning Water into Wine for the use of the Feast. And tho' to be sure, neither the *Quantity* nor the *Time* of introducing this Wine was such, as that it promoted or occasioned Drunkenness or Extravagance; yet no doubt it was design'd that the Guests should drink it with a merry Heart, as well as they had before eaten their Meat with Joy. For we learn from

Scri-

Scripture, that this was one of the designed Uses of Wine or Strong Drink, that it *Should cheer and make glad the Heart of Man*, as well as to cure the Crudities of his Stomach, and for his often InfirmitieS, and not only for Digestion, but to supply him with Vigour and Spirits, to go through the Fatigues of his Calling and Employment.

For in Gen. 49. we find plenty of Wine mentioned as one of the Blessings that Jacob foretold to his Son *Judah*: And tho' a small quantity of Wine at a time may serve for one of the uses of it, for promoting Digestion, &c. yet for the other, there seems a more plentiful quantity allowable; provided still that it be without Excess, as to all the Circumstances of the Person that useth it.

And thus we find *Solomon*, at the end of his Book of Proverbs, giving Direction: Give Strong Drink (saith he, ch. 31. v. 6, 7.) to him that is afflicted, and Wine to him that is of a heavy Heart, let him drink and forget his Poverty, and remember his Misery no more. No question therefore, but 'tis very lawful and allowable (nay, if he finds Benefit and Advantage by it, it is a Duty) for a Man that is either fatigued with Business, wearied and wasted with Study, soured with Care, opprest with unhappy Cir-

Circumstances, vext and tormented by Disappointments and Losses, &c. in these, I say, or such like Cases, 'tis very reasonable for a Man to drink such a moderate quantity of Wine, with a merry and cheerful Heart, as shall make him for a while forget his Care and Trouble, and enable him to go on for the future, in his Business, with Vigour ; and bear up under his Misfortunes with a manly Spirit and Resolution. For the *Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmitie*, but a wounded Spirit, who can bear't ?

And thus much may suffice for my first Head, viz.

The Lawfulness of *Eating our Bread with Joy*, and *drinking our Wine with a merry Heart*, under such Restrictions and Limitations, as Religion, Wisdom, Temperance, Health and Mens peculiar Circumstances should confine them to.

I proceed next to speak to my second Particular :

II. That there may be very good Use made, and great Advantages drawn from doing *this* sometimes publickly, in solemnly appointed Feasts and Entertainments.

For at such Times Men converse with one another with more Freedom and Unreservedness than they *usually* do ; they have a less REGARD to Self-interest and Private Advantage ;

their ;

their Minds grow more large and capacious, and their Temper and Humour more generous and great; and consequently they are then much better disposed to hearken to, and join with any Proposal that shall be made for the Publick Good, than when they are consulted singly; and when, it may be, their Minds are more narrow and confined, by being taking up with the Business of their own private Calling and Profession.

At such Times too, the Example of some generous publick Spirited Person, whose Thoughts are generally employed how he shall be useful and beneficial to Mankind, and who is always ready to advance or propose any thing for the Common Benefit and Advantage; At such time, I say, his Example shall probably be followed, and his Design furthered by many, who had neither Courage to propose it, nor Generosity enough to contribute to it at another.

And therefore all such as are blest with Minds great and noble enough to be contriving useful and charitable Schemes for the Support and Employment of the Poor, the Improvement of our Manufactures, &c. will know very well that such Occasions are very often proper for Proposals of that Nature.

And surely no Opportunity of this kind should be lost and left unimprov'd. Something of Char-
ity

Charity and Bounty done towards proper Objects of it, whenever you meet together, to rejoice and regale your selves with the free and plentiful use of God's good Creatures.

I shall not undertake to direct you, as to the particular kinds, degrees and measures of your Charity and Beneficence, all which I shall leave to be determined by your own Wisdom, the Design of your present meeting, and the Knowledge of your own peculiar Circumstances; yet I must earnestly press you to do something this way, and that according to the several Capacities and Abilities you are endowed with.

And nothing certainly can more sanctify Feasting, and make Meetings of this Nature acceptable to God, than that we should, together with the Praise and Thanksgiving which we ought constantly to offer up to him for his Goodness and Bounty to us, communicate some of the good things we receive to the Indigent and Distressed; *to those little Ones that suffer in this World;* whose Case our Blessed Lord compassionately makes his own, and declares he will graciously accept it, as if it were done to himself.

And thus, to dispense our Wealth Liberally for the use and Benefit of the Poor and Needy, is the very best way to preserve it: for what we give this way is not lost, we have not thrown it away;

tis lodged in the safest Treasuries, and will return to us again with sufficient Interest and Advantage.

The generous and the liberal Man will always be rich: rich he is at present to be sure, for he that gives away cannot want, because he thinks he hath enough, and therefore hath so: God's Providence is his present Estate, his Wisdom and Power are his Support and Defence, His Love and Favour are his Subsistence and Reward, and his Word and Promise are his Security, for the future; he remembers what the Prophet saith, that *he that deviseth liberal things, by such shall stand; and that he that giveth to the Poor shall not lack; and that to him that this way soweth Righteousness, there shall be a sure Reward.* Tho' he hath seemingly given his Substance to the Poor, he hath in reality only lent it to the Lord, and whatever he hath laid out this way, shall certainly be repaid again.

For this very thing (saith Moses (Deut. 15. 10.) God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto. And the wise Man assures us, that the liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered himself.

The contributing part of our Substance to the Poor, qualifies us also to enjoy the Rest with Comfort and Satisfaction. The offering up thus the first Fruits to God, and paying our Tribute

bute of Gratitude to him ; sets us right with him, and our Hearts and Minds at Rest : and then, like those spoken of *Acts 2. 46. We may eat our Meat with gladness and singleness of Heart.* This Virtue of Charity gives a delicious Relish to all our Enjoyments ; and we our selves share in the Happiness of all those who by our means obtain any Degree of it.

But withholding the Portion from the Poor, brings a Curse and a Canker upon all our Possessions, and renders what we should otherwise partake of with Joy, sour and unsavory to us : for with what Comfort or Satisfaction can we enjoy Dainties, and regale our selves with Plenty ; when we are conscious at the same time, that there are many poor Wretches pinched with Hunger or other Wants, which we have neglected to relieve and succour, tho' we were abundantly able so to do ? if we are not quite stupid and remorseless, we shall, on such a Reflection, be in the same case with the covetous Person mentioned in *Job 20. 18. 20.* Surely we shall feel no quietness in our Belly, we shall not rejoice in our Substance : and in the very fulness of our Sufficiency we shall be in Straits ! But on the other Hand there is a satisfaction and pleasure in Bounty, Charity and Liberality, that none understand but those that have Minds great enough to exercise it. The Giver usually enjoys more delight than the Receiver,

ceiver, if he bestow as he ought to do, with a cheerful and willing Mind: according as we read, *Acts 20. 35.* That it was the saying of the Blessed Jesus himself, *That 'tis a more Blessed or Happy thing to give than to receive; receiving a Charity, tho' a Man's Circumstances may make it necessary for him to desire it and to accept it; yet (if he thinks) it cannot but give him some degree of uneasiness, by reminding him of the meanness of his present State, and of his being obliged to subsist by the Favour and Charity of others:* But there is nothing of this in the Mind of him that *confers the Donation;* his Satisfaction is unmixed and unalloy'd; 'tis a Divine and God-like Pleasure; and in this Respect he is, what our Saviour commanded his Disciples to be, proportionate to his Nature, *perfect, as his Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* And this Happiness, which is this way begun here, will, by such an Excellent and Religious Practice be compleated hereafter in Heaven.

And therefore, as on the one hand we are told, that *without Charity all our Doings are nothing worth;* so we were assured on the other, that it will render us very acceptable and well-pleasing to God, *fulfil his Laws, and hide a multitude of Sins:* And as it peculiarly qualifies us for Heaven hereafter; *so this virtue will never fail us there, but the Exercise*

of

of it will in a great Measure be our Reward it-self.

But while I am thus recommending this admirable Virtue of Charity to you, I would not be misunderstood so, as if I confined the Nation of it only to what is most usually call'd *Charity*; that is, giving Money, Meat, Drink or Raiment to the Poor and Hungry, the Thirsty or the Naked; for this, tho' it be (when rightly applied) a good one, is yet but *one* kind of Charity: And such an one too, that when it is without due Caution and Consideration, to regulate and govern it, is often *no Charity* at all, but an Encouragement to Idleness, Impudence and Vice. But it would excellently answer the Design of, bring a Blessing upon, and sanctify such Publick Meetings as these, if you would consider at such times, that there are many other ways of exercising this Virtue of Charity, besides relieving Common Beggars; and which too would be much more useful to the Souls and Bodies of the Poor, as well as of infinite Benefit and Advantage to the Nation in general: and of these, I shall only now remind you of one, which I wish all Publick Bodies, Societies and Companies of Men would take into their serious Consideration: and that is, *The erecting of Charity-Schools for the Education of Poor Children*; where they

they should be taught the true Rudiments and Principles of Religion and Virtue, and be well qualified for Trade and Business in the World. You know a vast deal of Good hath been done this way in this great City ; and I hope all Persons will lend their helping hand, and do what lies in their Power towards carrying on so good a Work.

For by this means Wickedness is destroyed and nipt in the Bud, in its first Rise and Original ; the very Spring and Source of Iniquity and Evil is cut off ; the destructive Habits of Vice and Idle-ness are prevented from ever possessing our Youth at all ; and they are from their very Infancy inured to Labour and Diligence : They gain Learning enough to make them useful Servants to others, and in due time good Providers for themselves : They are made by this means Orthodox Members of the true Church, dutiful Subjects to their Prince, and useful Members of the Common-wealth : Now if this were made, either the Care of the Publick, or of particular Societies, Communities or Companies, as far as they are respectively able : what a glorious Prospect of Happiness and Security would it give us, for the future ? What a vast deal of Enthusiasm, Fanaticism, Faction, Folly, Knavery and Roguery would this prevent ? Our Roads would

would be, generally speaking, free from the Insults of Robbers, and our Houses from Burglars, Thieves and Pilferers : A succeeding Generation of such Religious, Virtuous and Industrious People might arise, as would make our Island as happy in the Practice of Piety, Goodness, Honesty and Integrity, as it is in its Situation, and in its Necessaries and Conveniences of Life : and as formidable for its Riches and Strength abroad, as it would be quiet, peaceful and secure at home.

And then we may well hope, that our Gracious God, who hath wrought so many Wonders for the Delivery and Safety of this Church and Nation, will continue to us his Blessing, Favour and Protection ; and together with a competent share of this World's Enjoyments, vouchsafe us Eternal Glory in Heaven.

Which God, &c.

F I N I S.

Q1

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